

WINDHOEK, Namibia, March 20—Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze tonight assured Secretary of State James A. Baker III that the Soviet Union does not contemplate using force to stop the secession of the Baltic state of Lithuania, and Baker said that the United States has no reason "not to take him at his word."

At the start of a 3 1/2-hour meeting here where the two ministers are attending Namibia's independence ceremonies, Shevardnadze was asked about mounting concern in the United States and Western Europe that Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev might use troops to forcibly block Lithuania's declaration that it is an independent nation.

"We are against the use of force in any region and particularly against using force domestically," Shevardnadze said. "This is what I've been saying all the time."

Following the meeting, Baker, who appeared with Shevardnadze briefly before reporters, said his Soviet counterpart had told him "force would not be a solution to the problem of Lithuania as far as the Soviet Union is concerned."

"I thought he was fairly definitive," Baker said later of his talks with Shevardnadze. "They want to solve the problem through dialogue. He said that several times. There is no reason we have not to take him at his word."

Shevardnadze, in his comments at the outset of the meeting, denied that any troops had been sent to reinforce those already stationed in Lithuania. "I'm not aware of anything like that," he said. "There are some troops deployed there on a permanent basis. They have a military district, and that's how it is. That's routine."

In addition to the Lithuania situation, the two ministers said they discussed the gamut of U.S.-Soviet relations including planning for the summit meeting between President Bush and Gorbachev expected to take place in Washington in June. They said a date for the summit would be announced later by the two presidents. Shevardnadze also said that he and Baker expected that they would have to meet twice more in order to finish planning the summit agenda.

## Shevardnadze Assures Baker On Lithuania

### *No Force Planned, Soviet Official Says*

Both ministers pointed to Namibia, whose independence was brought about in considerable part by cooperation between the United States, the Soviet Union and other major European governments working through the United Nations, as an example of what can be accomplished when the superpowers follow the path of cooperation rather than confrontation. They added that they are hopeful that more such cooperation ventures can be worked out, particularly in terms of the changes sweeping Eastern Europe.

In that connection, the two spent considerable time discussing the problem of unification of East and West Germany. Shevardnadze, asked whether the Soviet Union still opposes membership for a unified Germany in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, answered, "You already know our position."

That was a reference to the Soviet Union's insistence that a unified Germany should not belong to either the western or eastern military alliance but should have some form of political and military neutrality. However, this time, Shevardnadze appeared to leave a little room for maneuvering in his description of the Soviet position.

"As I've said to Secretary Baker, our main task is to make sure there is synchronization of the process of unification and shaping of European security structures," he said. "As for blocs, or alliances, we should give more thought to this question and discuss it. You know our position. You have to look for a solution in a way that merges the interests of all Europeans and all peoples of the world."

Shevardnadze said that he

thought the problem could be worked out within the "Two-plus-Four" formula agreed to by the United States, the Soviet Union, France, Britain and the two Germans in Ottawa last month.

Earlier today Baker conferred with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak about the chances for getting the Middle East peace process on track after the collapse of Israel's coalition government. The breakup was caused by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's unwillingness to accept Baker's ideas about how to start an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.